

905 looks to incineration to deal with garbage crisis

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The 905 is trying to get a grip on its garbage and many communities are considering burning it.

York and Durham regions are working together to build an \$250-million energy-from-waste facility.

They have five possible locations on their shortlist. Halton Region is also about to get into the garbage-burning business. All three regions are having a tough time convincing everyone it's a good idea.

Peel Region has been burning its trash for 15 years. An energy-from-waste plant opened in Brampton in 1992. It's located in an industrial strip in the Highway 407 and Bramalea Road area and is not near any residential development.

It burns about 50 per cent of the Region's trash and generates enough electricity to power itself and 6,000 homes.

It is privately owned and operated by Algonquin Power. The company had to go through the provincial government's environmental assessment process before it opened in 1992.

Part of the process included ensuring the incinerator is equipped with a state-of-the-art pollution control system. Peel's director of waste management told 680News there was some opposition in the 1980's before the plant opened but most of the community supported the plan.

"We don't get any complaints. It is well situated in an industrial strip along the 407. It has state of the art air pollution controls on it so we don't ever have emissions issues with the plant. It is well away from residential areas," Pollock explained.

"We do have a public liaison committee that meets quarterly with members of the public. We bring in and present emissions data from the plant or any other issues that are going on so we have a good dialogue with the community."

As of 2010, the GTA will no longer be allowed to truck its garbage to Michigan.

"Peel Region has made a decision to try and manage as much of it as we can within our own borders so we're not shipping our waste to other jurisdictions. Within Peel, energy-from-waste is the way we can do that," Pollock said.

Energy-from-waste plants are extremely popular in Europe. Pollock said most European cities use them to dispose of waste and create electricity. He said the technology has improved in the last 20 years.

York and Durham have five sites on their shortlist - one in the York Region town of East Gwillimbury and four in Clarington in Durham Region, near Lake Ontario. East Gwillimbury Council this week voted unanimously against the proposed site.

Some York Region politicians who are against incineration say it isn't necessary because Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill are all using the green bin organics waste program and the rest of York Region will be using the green bins in September.